

West Virginia Writers' Project

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Subject Chapter 6 - Section 1

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I have gathered this information from many people who one knew a great deal. The following gave me information: Miss Dice Smith, Mrs. Geo. Clendenen, Rev. L. S. Shires, Mr. James Jordan, Mrs. Hella Leager, Mrs. James Marshall, all of Hillsboro and Mr. T. S. McNeel of Marlinton.

the church were:

John McNeel

Martha McNeel

James Lewis

Rebecca Lewis

Alexander Waddell & wife

Charles Kinnison

Jacob Kinnison

Mrs. James Brinnell

John Switzer & wife

Richard Hill

Nancy Hill

Abraham McNeel & wife

Some years after John McNeel and the Kinnison Brothers came to the little levels, they built a small log cabin as

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Chapter 6- Section 1

There is very little known about the little White Pole Church, but it is said that Bishop Asbury, the great apostle of Methodism, was the first minister who visited the Little Levels, and that as early as 1789 he preached in the little "White Pole Church", erected by John McNeel. The tradition is doubtless true, for it is substantiated by general records of the church.

It appears that the first organization was perfected here in the year of 1789 and at the time the members composing the church were:

John McNeel

Martha McNeel

James Lewis

Rebecca Lewis

Alexander Waddell & wife

Charles Kinnison

Jacob Kinnison

Mrs. James Brinnell

John Switzer & wife

Richard Hill

Nancy Hill

Abraham McNeel & wife

Some years after John McNeel and the Kinnison Brothers came to the Little Levels, they built a small log cabin as

a place of worship. This cabin was called the White Pole Church and in all probability was the first church erected west of the Allegheny Mountains. It was built of very small logs and the logs were peeled which gave the church the appearance of being built of white poles and so, the name "White Pole".

This church was located in a part of what is now the McNeel Graveyard, situated on a hill overlooking the ancestral home, and on the farm now belonging to Dr. John McNeel. This land has been in the possession of a John McNeel ever since 1765.

This Cemetery was started when Martha McNeel, wife of John McNeel, dug the grave and buried her child, perhaps with the aid of a negro servant, while John McNeel was at the battle of Point Pleasant in the year 1774. John McNeel died in 1825 at the age of eighty years, and was buried in the McNeel Graveyard. The grave is marked by a sandstone carved from the native hills and engraved by John Bruffey, a neighbor.

The White Pole Methodist Episcopal Church, after some years, became too small and too inaccessible and the Methodist Church was moved into the town of Hillsboro.

Information: Hardesty's Encyclopedia

Mrs. Rella F. Yeager

Mr. T. S. McNeel

Since writing what I could find about the White Pole Church, I have been able to see the original deed to the land upon which this church was built. This deed is recorded in Bath County, Virginia but Mr. T. S. McNeel has the original. The following is a part of the deed.

Deed: 10th April, 1799. Between John McNeel & Martha his wife of the County of Bath, State of Virginia of the one part and Thos. Scott, Jno. Pinnell, Richard Hill, Griffith Evans, Jacob Kinnison, Alex Waddell, William Waddell, James Lewis and Jonathan McNeel, Trustees, in trust for the use and purpose hereinafter mentioned and declared. All the right, title, interest, property, claim and demand whatsoever, either in law or equity which he the said John McNeel & Martha his wife hath in, to, or upon all & singular a certain lot or piece of ground situate, lying and being in the County of Bath & State aforesaid and containing one Acre of land together with the MEETING HOUSE, known by the name of MOUNT TABER, woods, waterways, privileges and appurtenances thereto belonging or in any way appertaining: To have and to hold, in trust that they shall erect and build or cause to be erected and built thereon a house or place of worship for the use of the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

his
John McNeel
mark

Martha McNeel
Signed, sealed and delivered in the presence of us -
James H. Evans, Alex. L. Berry

Mr. T. S. McNeel tells me that the real name of the White Pole Church was Mount Taber as you can see by the deed. However it has always been known by the name "White Pole Church". This church or meeting house was built some time before the deed was made and was now too small for the number who worshipped there. The people were contemplating a new church and so John and Martha McNeel gave the land as a location for a new Methodist Episcopal Church. The location was very inaccessible and when John Jordan, son-in-law- of John McNeel, offered some land in a better location for the church this was decided upon as the site for the new church. All denominations worshiped at the White Pole Church. It was more of a Meeting House but this was the beginning of the Methodist organization in the Hillsboro Community and the first in Pocahontas County.

As I have said before John Jordan gave one acre of land for the church. This land was located about two miles east of Hillsboro on the old road leading to Denmar. The exact date that this church was used is not known but the deed recorded in the Clerk's office shows: Jan. ____ 1830 - From John Jordan and Miriam Jordan to William Edmiston, Andrew Edmiston, John Grimes, Richard Hill, Mark Kinnison, Abraham Hill, Nathaniel Kinnison, Trustees for Methodist Episcopal Church, one acre of land with houses that are built thereon, woods, waterways and privileges, in trust with the house that is built thereon for the purpose of Divine worship for the use and membership of the Methodist Episcopal Church, according to

the rules and discipline which from time to time may be agreed upon and adopted by the ministers and preachers of the said church or by the annual Conference.

So according to this deed this church must have been in use about 1830. From the way the deed reads it sounds as though the building which was used for a church was already on the land, but Mr. McNeel says that there was a building built for a church in which to worship. This church burned and is now known by everyone as the "Old Burned Church".

Mr. James Jordan, a great grand son of the John Jordan who gave the land for the Old Burned Church, is eighty-three years old. He told me that a man named John Casebolt, who had a little store on Locust Creek, went to this church. It seems that he had some kind of a disagreement with some members of the congregation. He gave a negro man a fur hat to burn the church. Casebolt disappeared very suddenly and never returned to this community. Mr. Jordan assured me that this was a fact.

Mr. Jordan said that the first preacher that he could remember was a circuit rider named Rev. Nixon. He came on foot and walked and preached all through Pocahontas and Randolph Counties. As he was very small at that time, Mr. Jordan doesn't remember exactly how he was paid but thought perhaps they gave him a very small sum of money.

The next church built by this organization was located on the hill adjoining the personage lot in the town of Hillsboro and was named Wesley Chapel in honor of John Wesley. It

was a frame building. The land upon which this church was built was given by Nathaniel Kinnison.

The deed: Jan 15, 1853 from Nathaniel Kinnison to Israel I. Callison, Richard Hill, James Edmiston, Geo. W. Lewis, Thomas Morrison, Lb. Whiting, J. H. Ruckman, S. Auldridge, and C. W. Ruckman, Trs. - one acre near the village of Hillsboro adjoining parsonage lot belonging to the M. E. Church, to erect a place of worship for the use of members of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

This church, Wesley Chapel, situated on the hill beside the parsonage was used for many years. But toward the end of nineteenth century the congregation began to look for a location upon which they might build a larger, more modern building.

Among the members who worshiped at these first churches were:

William Burgess

William and Nancy Kinnison

James and Rebecca Lewis

Samuel and Susan Auldridge

Abraham Hill

John Grimes

Mark Kinnison

William Edmiston

Andrew Edmiston

Conrad Burgess

Betty Burgess

Alex Welch

Joseph and Mattie Beard
 Joel and Rebecca Hill
 Thomas and Annie Hill
 George and Nancy Hill
 Washington and Margaret Hill
 John and Elizabeth Blair
 Richard and Lydia McNeel
 Capt. Wm. L. & Margaret McNeel
 Jacob and Miriam McNeel
 Isaac and Nancy McNeel
 John S. and Mary E. Moore
 James and Elizabeth Burnside
 John L. and Mary S. Kinnison
 David C. and Rebecca Kinnison
 John and Cynthia Jordan
 James and Fannie Jordan
 James and Nancy Hultz
 George and Laura Curry
 David and Susan McCarty
 Ellis and Sally Hill McCarty
 Richard Hill and wife
 Burke Hill
 Josiah and Nancy Callison
 Wm. H. Overholt and wife
 Wm. and Fannie Callison
 James Callison
 Edward Overholt

Mrs. Lilly Brown

James H. Weiford

Margaret Burnside Weiford

Deemie Burnside

Miriam Burnside

Marshall and Virginia Peyatt

Information: Miss Dice Smith
Mrs George Clendenen
Rev. L. S. Shires
Mr. James Jordan
Mrs. Rella Yeager
Mrs. James Marshall
Mr. T. S. McNeel

Juanita S. Willey

Chapter 6

July 2, 1940

The First Church in Pocahontas County

White Pole Church

This church was built by John McNeel, the first permanent settler in the county, to show his gratitude to God for all his providential care, after all his wanderings and fears to permit him to find such a pleasant, wealthy place in which to live. It was dedicated, "To the worship of the Builder of the Universe." It is one of the very first churches to be built west of the Alleghenies. It is said that Bishop Asbury, the great Apostle of Methodism was the first minister who visited the Little Levels as early as 1789, and that he preached in the little White Pole Church. The tradition is doubtless true, for it is substantiated by general records of the church. It appears that the first organization was perfected here in 1789, and at that time the members composing the church were: John McNeel, Martha McNeel, James Lewis and wife Alexander Waddell and wife, Charles Kennison, Jacob Kennison, Mrs. James Brinnell, John Switzer and wife, Richard Hill, Nancy Hill, and Abraham McNeel and wife.

The deep hold that Methodism held in the Little Levels for a hundred years or more can be explained when I say that the man and woman who built the White Pole Church laid the foundation of the Methodist Church in Pocahontas County.

Martha Davis McNeel, wife of John McNeel brought with her to her new home in the Little Levels, a part of her dowry, a Bible